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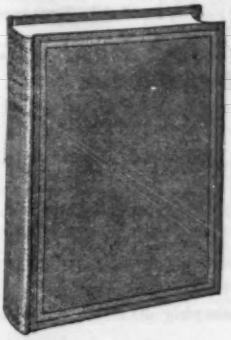

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The Black Cat

A Monthly Magazine of Original Short Stories.

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Vol. VIII., No. 3.
Whole No., 87.

DECEMBER, 1902.

5 cents a copy.
50 cents a year.

Entered at the Post-Office at Boston, Mass., as second-class matter.

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Andrew Josiah Sarkon.*

BY FOLGER SWIFT.

THERE were singular people on the Overly Saddle West, but I know of none who could put Andrew Josiah Sarkon into the shadow. He lived alone with a few dry cows and a traded horse or two, and had the greatest number of lives behind him for a man of forty of any single person I had ever known. My object, I am sorry to say, was to do him good. What greater mistake can any one commit than to try to do a singular person good? By all means give the tramp bread and the millionaire a friendly seat at your table, but be cautious how you expose yourself to the beseeching humility of the man who asks only for the use of your ear.

From time to time Josiah travelled down to the plain from the desolate eminence of Overly Saddle West, and then he would stop at my house, sometimes for a meal, sometimes for a day or more. He never would sleep in the house, but kept a roll of blankets in the barn for these occasions. I rather enjoyed him for his stories, but more especially whenever he was about I felt a certain sense of sustaining righteousness at the knowledge of feeding a man

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* The writer of this story received a cash prize of $300 in THE BLACK CAT story contest ending February 26, 1902.

good bread and beef who dwelt painfully and hungrily alone on the West barrens. I was certain that no harm could come to me or my household while I burned this incense to hospitality.

"I was once a stage driver in California," said he one evening, placing his feet carefully on the cushion of a neighboring chair, while the children gathered about him and my wife smiled in from the next room indulgently. "My route was a difficult one and ascended over the Stonedripple Pass. That was before the summit Inn was built, and passengers had to carry lunch and eat it at the top of the pass while the horses rested. It was a fine spot for hold-ups, and the lone highwayman seeking opportunities to rise in society was not likely to pass that excellent business location by. One day he appeared with a mask on his face and the politeness of an unmarried parson in his voice. As soon as the passengers saw him coming in the distance they held up their hands as if touched by a common current of electricity, while he sedately sounded their pockets, telling the women to fear nothing and not to scream, and walked off with $375. He was very young, for there were no wrinkles in his neck.

"I was impressed by this transaction. My salary for driving sixteen hours a day and assisting about the horses at both ends of the night was sixty dollars a month. I prized the position because of its cultivating influences. The familiar association with ladies and gentlemen which accompanied it I believed would repair an absence of early educational advantages from which I had frequently suffered, if I listened attentively to all that was said. Yet I had several young brothers whom I desired to send to college, particularly one who had set his heart on the pulpit. I saw a way to do good.

"The scenery around the Stonedripple Summit was pleasingly adapted to the plan which I formed to take the horses out of the stage and lead them into a clump of trees to feed, in whose seclusion I changed my clothes and masked my face. In this disguise I made a small circuit and emerged suddenly upon my passengers with a large revolver in hand. They behaved well and upon counting the proceeds that evening I found them to be $500 and a costly diamond ring. I had not wanted the ring, but a gentleman forced it upon me as a voluntary condition for sparing his

life. I was not so foolish as to secrete my clothes for the detectives to discover, but carried them back to the stage in one of the grain bags which the horses had emptied.

"On the remainder of the journey the passengers were naturally very much excited and conversed about the color of the highwayman's hair and his height. Opinions varied as to his height between five and seven feet, while all agreed that his hair was short and red. Mine was long and yellow.

"About a month after I repeated the enterprise with greater success, for then I blew open the Wells Fargo box and secured $2,000. The country was thoroughly scoured with bloodhounds and San Francisco detectives, and the city papers gave out long accounts of the remarkable clues and how the robber escaped. He was seen by a large number of farmers, some of whom fed him at the point of a pistol. The posse tracked him to the foot of Mount Shasta, which he ascended, and once had him surrounded in a house, but he took the farmer's pretty daughter, with whom all the detectives were secretly in love, into the saddle with him and rode away at breakneck speed with this protection. Her father begged the officers not to shoot, which they had no idea of doing, for fear of killing the girl, so the villain escaped.

"For some time after this speculation I was quiet, but the love of fame and success at length broke out anew. I did not deserve much in this instance, for I neglected to study my passengers beforehand. There was among them a man that I could plainly see, afterwards, was a United States Marshal. It stuck out all over him and even his pockets were full of it, if I had looked. Success always blinds one to obstacles. Well, as I came jauntily forward from my retreat I didn't take the trouble to point my gun at the company, but just dangled it in my hand where it could be seen. Generally this is enough and it shows consideration for the ladies. Before I could do anything a fellow in the stage put his head out, with a long-barrelled six-shooter pointed straight in my face, and ordered me to drop my gun. I felt extremely unhappy, and so numb that I was unable to comply with his request; so paralyzed, in fact, that a moment after, when a loud report occurred and I knew for a certainty that he had put a bullet through me and that I was as good as dead, I was unable to fall down.

"My feelings returned and the haze cleared from my eyes when I heard a voice which I seemed to remember order the marshal to get out and empty his pockets. It was the voice of the delicate young highwayman who had held us up the first time, and he had fired the shot and knocked the marshal's big revolver out of his hand. The presence of this officer convinced us that there was good money in the express box and I blew it open while the other fellow soothed the passengers and comforted the marshal. We found $20,000, which we divided between us, presenting the marshal fifty dollars apiece with a request to keep quiet about the hold-up for the sake of his family and friends.

"My young friend said we must go in opposite directions for greater safety and we bade a hearty good-by.

"That marshal was the hottest man I met in California. When I brought the six horses up he demanded one of them in the name of the Government to ride on barebacked to the next town for help, and I gave him one that never let a man sit on his back more than half an hour at a time. With my pulling capacity thus crippled I had an excuse for slow progress, and, besides, I took a nut off one of the bolts, so that by and by we had a breakdown, and when we finally caught up with the marshal, sitting by the side of the road where he had been thrown, he was madder than he had been before. The horse had run off out of sight and we reached the next town four hours late.

"I thought this would certainly allow my accomplice to get away, but it did not. He was captured with the money and sentenced to fifteen years. The sound of this wasn't pleasant, so I didn't venture another hold-up and abandoned driving after a suitable time. Merely going back and forth over the pass and answering the same questions of tourists had grown stale. A comparatively rich man is bored where a poor one is glad to be spoken to."

"Didn't you try to get the fellow who had saved your life out of jail?" asked my young son of six, who was leaning devotedly against Sarkon's knee.

"That was unnecessary," answered Sarkon. "He was a perfect shot and ran no risk when he rescued me. It was better than shooting the marshal himself, which he might have had to do if I

hadn't been there. And then I probably saved his life, for if I hadn't come up first the officer would have had him where he had me and might have shot him. I also took my brothers into consideration. I educated them with the ten thousand dollars and they are all useful men."

"What an incredible villain he is!" exclaimed my wife, when Andrew Josiah had gone off to the barn and we were preparing to retire. "I shall never feel safe with him again when you are not here, and I wish that fifteen hundred dollars were out of the house now. I think you ought to sit up and guard it all night. Do you suppose Sarkon knows that the money was paid to you this afternoon?"

"My dear," cried I, "Sarkon's stories are pure inventions. He has told us a thousand astonishing situations in which he figured as the man with horns, and I do not believe he was ever in a single one of them. We are much safer in having him at the barn; he would help us if anything happened. I don't deny, though, that Crouse behaved very oddly in demanding that I should take the money when I had asked for a check, after it was too late to get into town to deposit it. But he's naturally contrary."

Maria continued to be nervous, but I laughed at her and, to show my unconcern, went to sleep. She says that she kept awake until after two, so that it must have been nearly three when I was awakened by a rough shake and found three men in the room. Then I operated a little contrivance which I had invented to call up my hired men, who sometimes stayed on the place over night and slept in the barn from preference, to be near the horses. I had put an electric bell in the barn near where Sarkon slept, which could be rung by pulling a cord, and for greater convenience on cold mornings I had extended this cord into the bed. This device was now very useful, for I could pull the cord and set off the bell without the burglars knowing that I was doing it. Having done this I felt quite secure since Sarkon, who was alone in the stables that night, would soon be on the scene to frighten the intruders away.

The men had removed my Winchester, which stood at the head of the bed and, being helpless against so many, I suffered myself to be bound without resistance and counselled Maria to do the

same, in order not to awaken and frighten the children. Having tied us, they commanded me to tell them the whereabouts of the money I had received that day, placing a weapon against my temple to assist my memory. It was death to resist, and, as Maria said it was foolish to die for fifteen hundred dollars and I knew Sarkon would be up before they could dig it out, I told them the place —in the cellar under a barrel of potatoes buried about two feet. I had secreted the shovels and it did take some time to scrape out the dirt with their hands, and yet no Sarkon appeared.

They got the money and departed, leaving us tied. Then I softly called to my eldest son of nine, who came in his nightgown with big eyes and cut the rope, while I cautioned him not to say anything away from home and thus spoil a good piece of detective work I had been thinking about.

There was no doubt in my mind who two of the robbers were. They could only be the two Crouses. I had just sold them a piece of land worth twice the money for fifteen hundred dollars, to get them out of the neighborhood where I lived. They were evil-minded people and I did not want my children to grow up near theirs to imbibe their immorality. I was careful what my children heard. Their purchase was several miles away and they were going to live on it. Of course, they were two of the burglars, for they wouldn't let such a chance slip. Was Sarkon the third? I was debating this question to myself when, to my complete surprise, the man himself came unconcernedly in to breakfast.

I preserved my composure and remarked, "I rang for you last night, Sarkon. My wife was ill and I thought we should want you to ride into town for the doctor."

"I am a deep sleeper," replied the enigma, "and I didn't hear you." He was in high spirits and began one of those unfailing stories about himself. My wife could not stand that and rose from the table, taking the children with her.

When she had gone Andrew Josiah Sarkon drew out a wallet, which I recognized as mine, and laid it on the table.

"Count it," he said, with a triumphant flourish. The money of which I had been robbed was within.

"Sarkon," I demanded, "where did you come by this?"

"I was the third man," said he. "When I left the house last night it was so dark that if you walked fast you had to push against it. I hadn't gone far before I heard some voices talking low and I stooped down by a bush hoping not to be seen. I heard enough to know what they were up to and then tried to creep off to give you warning. They started at the same time and stumbled over me. They were going to stab me, but I said, 'See here, I know the inside of that house and you don't. Three men can do a slicker job than two. Give me a couple of hundred dollars and I'll see you through with it and you won't need to commit murder.'

"It struck them just right and I took the lead. I saw I could protect you from violence by being there, and probably get your money back. You weren't likely to tackle three men, but you might have risked it with two, if they had been clumsy, and the Crouses are clumsy. Then they would have killed you, certain. I got the Winchester out of your reach before we woke you up, to protect your life.

"After the thing was done I showed the fellows that suspicion would settle right on them because they were hard cases and the only ones that knew you had the money about you, and I advised them to let me keep the plunder until the search calmed down. As a friend of the family, I said, I shouldn't be suspected. They promised to kill me if I played traitor, and gave the stuff into my care. So here it is."

"Sarkon," cried I with great emotion, "you are a noble man. You have certainly preserved my life by placing your own in danger. These ruffians will kill you when they know what you have done. I shall get them into the penitentiary on your evidence and then you will be safe."

"Don't do that," responded Sarkon meditatively, "for such characters never forget and when they come out they will kill us both. You have your money, and you can afford to let the matter rest. I will drop out of sight and that will be the end of it. Of course, they won't suspicion that I've restored the money, and you'll be protected."

The generosity of my preserver coming fresh on the excitement of the night undid my nerves and I acted on the impulse of the moment, without consulting Maria.

"The fifteen hundred is yours," I cried heartily. "You shall not suffer for your unselfish bravery. You are poor and I am well off; take it and go where you can be safe and prosper."

He thanked me effusively, restored the wallet to his pocket, and took up his hat to go.

"Sarkon," I called after him as he moved off, "we are something more to each other than mere friends now; seriously, were you in those stage robberies?"

"Upon my honor, I was," returned he; "that story was true."

Whenever I met the Crouses after that I could see that they looked terribly black and beaten.

About a year later a poor wretch was lodged in the town "cooler" for drunkenness, who said he had business with me. He was hardly out of his booze when I entered the jail, but he was very secretive and would talk to me only in private.

He said that a year ago he and a road partner were footing it along near my place when a "gent" whom he pictured so accurately that I recognized Sarkon in the first sentence — there is but one Sarkon in this world — turned up suddenly from behind a stone fence and informed them that they could pull a hundred dollars apiece that night by helping him do a house. Being hard up and hungry they consented and had done their part, but the crook never paid them. They hadn't taken him for a sharper and had trusted him. As I was the man they had robbed, "it looked as if when you went to the bottom of the thing that I was responsible for what they had lost," and they thought I ought to make it up to them. But for his part he would let me off for half of the amount and would agree to carry his partner's share to him.

I made the rascal describe minutely what had happened in my house the night of the robbery, so that there could be no mistake, and then paid his passage to South Africa, where he promised to enlist — circumstances which I did not think well to mention to Maria, for she does not believe in war.

Shortly after, I read in the court-house news that Andrew Josiah Sarkon had paid off the mortgage on his Overly Saddle West ravines. He had returned, and when I met him in town started forward to grasp my hand. But I passed him by without speaking. There are times when the humanity in me seems frozen.

I am not a man of nerves in the usual sense, yet from that day I failed to enjoy my house. I seemed to feel that Sarkon from his hill was looking down on me. He possessed the strange charm of being a member of the family without your wanting him. I knew that he would return to our hearth in spite of us. And there was Maria, a year older than formerly, who ought at her time of life to be shielded from harassing details. Her recovery from practical affairs is sometimes slow. In response to a reasonable offer for my properties made at that time I sold out and moved away.

Upside-down-ville.*

BY GEORGE H. HEBARD.

IT will be useless to search in atlases for the situation of Upside-down-ville. It is not in the books for the reason that it has no boundaries. Boundaries denote ownership, and none but the poorest and most reckless Upside-down-villians burden themselves with real estate, and even they deny it. Hence no surveys are ever made, there are no division lines, no maps.

We journeyed into the place on foot. With a vacation of but two weeks we could not afford to spend time on the steam cars, which go at a speed of only twenty miles per day, and are therefore seldom used except by those having superfluity of time. To such, car riding commends itself because of the freedom from dust, and absolute safety of life and limb, such a thing as a railroad accident never having been known. Travellers in haste generally walked and had their baggage sent by ox-team express. We did likewise. (I use the word "we" in the editorial sense, meaning myself, Thomas Jones.)

Soon after midnight the town showed up in the distance and we heard the sound of wheels on the pavements and the hum of factories. It seemed strange then, but we learned later that Upside-down-villians work only at night and sleep through the day. Soon we could see carts rolling over the sidewalks and joined the crowds walking on the greensward in the middle of the road.

Accosting one person we asked to be directed to the residence of John Smith.

"John Smith? What a curious name! Never heard anything like it before."

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* The writer of this story received a cash prize of $100 in THE BLACK CAT story contest ending February 26, 1902.

A directory was hanging on a tree close by. The person took it down and looked through the list beginning with "S." But Smith was not in it. Then we were asked if John was a married woman.

"John, I said. So of course he's a man."

"How can that be? John is certainly a woman's name. By and by you will be claiming that James and Peter are men. Oh, no. Don't talk that way to me. Our men all have men's names like Lulu and Daisy and Alice."

We returned to another and inquired for John.

"I think it is Johanna Smith you want. He is a foreigner from the United States, and claimed when he came here that John was a man's name in his country. However, he finally changed it to Johanna and is so called here."

"But there was not even one Smith in your directory, although the book is very large. He was probably overlooked in the canvass."

"I hardly think it can be an error, for our canvassers are very careful. As we all move at least twice a year, and those who can afford it much oftener, we are all anxious to see to it ourselves that every new name or place of residence is recorded."

"Why do you move so often? Excuse me, but is it because it is cheaper than paying rent?"

"Not at all. Don't you know that if we were to stay in any place for a long time people would begin to claim we owned it? To many of us that would mean disaster. It would overburden us with taxes and public duties. And money would accumulate until we were overwhelmed and perhaps driven to suicide. So I hardly think it is for that reason that Johanna's name does not appear. More likely it is because he is a man. As a usual thing only women's names are in the directory, they being in trade, manufacture and the like. Unless a man is engaged in active business, as he seldom is, there would be no use in cumbering the list with the name of one of the weaker sex."

"How strange!"

"By the way, who are you?"

"Thomas Jones, if you please."

"Jones? Another remarkable name! Never heard anything

like it! And 'Thomas' too. How harsh it seems to call such a beautiful lady Thomas."

"Oh, come now, don't 'lady' me. I'm a man, every inch, and don't you forget it."

"A man, and your name is Thomas? Can it be that you also come from the United States?"

"You state the case exactly. I'm a citizen of the United States, and my name is Tom Jones."

"Then let me give you a word of advice. Take off the women's clothes you now have on and substitute the skirts befitting a man, otherwise you may get into untold trouble. And change the Thomas into Thomasina for the same reason."

"I can't do that. I'm not accustomed to anything but coats and trousers. Why, you don't wear skirts yourself."

"But I am a woman, and all women wear coats and trousers. Skirts would be very inconvenient for us who do the heavy work, who have to run, jump, ride horseback, lift heavy weights, and be out in all kinds of weather. The men, who stay mostly at home, and whose only aim in life is to look pretty and get married, can indulge in skirts and draperies."

"But you certainly are a man. I know it by your whiskers and deep bass voice."

"What voice would a woman have? Soprano? Oh, no. We are all basses and baritones and tenors. Our men sing soprano and alto. Why, my husband, who is a pure soprano, can sing high C above the staff with ease."

"And do women wear whiskers and moustaches?"

"Not all. Many shave their faces clean. But I am detaining you. The person you wish to see boards at the Outside Inn. I will let my son show you the way."

The creature we had talked with hailed another across the street.

"Here, Maria, show this party the Outside Inn."

"Excuse me," said I, "Mister — Miss —"

"Mrs. Henry Strong."

"Well, then, Mrs. Strong, you said you would send your son. This seems to be an old lady, or man, whichever way you may call him, and I feel as if it were asking too much."

"And so he is my son. You seem still confused in regard to sex. As for age, he is only ninety."

"Only ninety, and your son! How old are you yourself?"

"Nearly sixty."

"Then you mean that this is your mother, I mean your father, since he is ninety and you but sixty."

"I mean what I said. He is my son."

"But how can that be?"

"Are we not a hundred years old when we are born? Well, Maria was born ten years ago, and ten from a hundred leaves ninety, does it not? I was born forty years ago, and that makes me sixty. My mother and father are twenty and twenty-five, respectively. My grandmother lived to the very advanced age of a year and a half. Very few live that long."

"What is the greatest age your people attain?"

"Well, we have a song of longevity that begins, 'Oh, to be nothing.' Emma Carson did even better than that. He lived to be a minus quantity!"

"Indeed."

"He was minus two and a half months old when he died."

At this point the "boy" broke in on our conversation, being evidently in haste to get back.

"Oh, come on. I don't like to be out after daybreak. It is so dark when the sun shines it makes me afraid. If the stars should come out it would be still worse."

"Sun and stars don't shine at the same time?"

I looked up. The moon was sailing through a clear sky, but not a star twinkled. The boy gazed at me as if he doubted my sanity.

"Look over there," pointing to the sky, "and see."

There, to be sure, was the sun just showing over the edge of the horizon. A few stars gleamed faintly near it. As it rose higher the redness changed to a gloomy purple, and streaks of shade seemed to fall from it, wrapping the world in an atmosphere of darkness. Across the sky the moon was disappearing in a blaze of glory, throwing shafts of silver at the Prince of Darkness afar.

"A fine moonset in the east," remarked Maria.

"You mean the west," said I correctingly.

"Don't you know the moon and sun always rise in the west? Then they go round by the north and set in the east."

He started along at a brisk walk, and I hurried to keep at his side, for I wanted to learn more of the curious world I was in.

"What are those wooden umbrellas set along the street for?" said I to my guide.

"Those are street lights. Don't you know a street light when you see it?"

I looked again. There were no lamps beneath, but wherever the rays of the sun were intercepted and could not fall upon the ground a glow of light was reflected. Sides of houses sheltered from the sun were illumined in the same way. Even our own figures reproduced their shapes in bright streaks behind us. I looked at them in amazement.

"Passing events leave a brilliance behind," said Maria.

I would have lingered more, but my guide showed impatience. As we plodded onward we passed many heavy walls covered with square timbers. We had come by others which I had supposed to be houses, as they had windows through which light shone out. But these showed not so much as a rift in their sides.

"What are these places?" I asked.

The boy looked pityingly as he answered, "Houses, of course."

"What kind of houses?"

"Houses to live in; what else would they be? I don't like to have you guy me with such silly questions."

I disclaimed all intention of making fun and explained that things were so different where I lived that I felt a bit strange.

"Do you have earthquakes, that you build such heavy walls?"

"We have waterquakes. I never heard of an earthquake."

"Then why do you build houses but one story high?"

"These are cellars and basements you are looking at."

"Oh, I see. The owners probably spent so much on the foundations that they couldn't afford to finish them."

"Yes, they are completed," disputed the boy.

"But I don't see anything but the basements."

"How could you, when the rest goes down into the ground?"

"Are all cellars on top of buildings?"

"We certainly wouldn't put them anywhere else."

"Then why do you build them so heavy?"

"These are big blocks along here, seven stories deep."

Just then we heard the chimes striking the hour. They not only had a far-away sound, but seemed also to come from some place under our feet.

"What bells are those?"

"The chimes of St. Susan. They belong to this church here. Look down and you can see them."

We stepped to a railing surrounding the top of a square excavation walled with stone and piercing the ground a hundred and fifty feet. Near the bottom bells were suspended. As one turned on its side the tone that came up was deafening.

"Why do they dig these holes so deep?"

"It wouldn't be much of a steeple if it wasn't deep. Besides, the deeper you go the farther you can hear the sound."

A little farther on we came to a "basement" still unfinished.

"Ah," said I, "somebody is starting a new house."

"Finishing it. We build the cellar after the rest of the house is done. There is the Outside Inn next door. Now I must get home and abed, for it will soon be morning."

I thanked him for his kindness, and away he ran.

I was left in front of an unusually large cellar superstructure. Between it and the roadside a spacious area with broad stone steps led down to a wide and hospitable looking entrance. As I neared it a colored woman threw open the door and admitted me to a fine reception-room. Long and wide flights of stairs led from it to floors beneath. Down an open space in the centre I could see the stair landings. From the lowest story of all came a light that pervaded the entire building. In fact, it was only when the door opened that it grew darker, and the darkness came in from the outside. I learned afterward the light was brilliant day and night if windows and doors were kept closed, but these were often left open to tone down the glare.

I asked the colored woman, whom I found to be the porter, if Johanna Smith was in, and was conducted to his rooms in the lowest story. When he opened the door to my rap I thought I had encountered some strange woman. He had on the regulation skirts common to men in that country, and was bereft of the lux-

uriant moustache which had been his pride when we used to chum in old Connecticut. But I did not long remain in doubt of his real personality, for he grasped my hand, and said in a tone that spoke volumes, "Tom!"

"Jack!"

These two monosyllables were like the two taps of the snare drum introducing music by the full band, and ours began at once. At first he plied me with questions until he had received a summary of what had transpired in the United States since his departure. Then, finding I was nearly famished, he took me to the dining-room on the upper floor. There I had a bountiful repast, beginning with coffee and dessert and ending with a delicious soup. Many new dishes appealed to my clamorous appetite, and I enjoyed to the utmost the oysters stuffed with turkey, roast clam with veal dressing, and the delicate lamb fritters. Jack apologized for the meat dishes served in December, saying they were not usually on the menu in months having a "ber" in them, but as January was only two days off the chef had strained a point to cater to the taste of boarders fond of that food. We did not linger at table, as I was extremely tired and anxious to get to bed. A room was procured for me up under the basement. I might have had one next to Jack's at the bottom of the house, but he feared the strong light might make me wakeful, and so put me in a room with windows to let in the darkness from outside, but as it was then midwinter and extremely warm weather he advised me to leave the windows themselves closed. He showed me how to regulate the temperature by means of a register in the ceiling which admitted cold air from the ice-box above. Then I said good-night, retired, and was soon asleep.

When I awoke it was broad night-light, hens were crowing, cats barking, and everybody up and stirring. Dressing hastily, I made my way to the street for a mouthful of fresh air before the gong should sound for the first meal, which I had been told would be supper. Feeling a cool breeze from an open door of the basement I looked in. The cook's assistant was just lifting a huge block of ice into the cooking range. An appetizing odor pervaded the air, and I wondered from whence it came, as there was not pot or kettle on the top of the stove. But pretty soon the cook pulled a kettle

from beneath that was boiling merrily. Then I noticed numerous other utensils for frying, broiling or stewing, all under the range, the steam from which went down through a hole in the floor to parts unknown. In reply to a question I learned that ice was the only fuel used for stoves, furnaces or boilers. It was gathered in July and stacked where the sun could shine on it, in which way it could be kept for years.

Jack was early in search of me. With rosy cheeks (I really believe he painted) and the daintiest of gowns, I should have fallen in love with him if I had not known his sex. I gave him my arm and we entered the dining-room. The meal was much as before, though the bill of fare was more elaborate and an orchestra played. Again I was made acquainted with new dishes, dainty and toothsome. Particularly good were the fried watermelon, strawberry patties and butternut pies. I noticed it was proper form to eat with the knife, stir one's tea with a fork and drink from a saucer, so I did accordingly.

Some be-skirted gentlemen near us were so decked out with diamonds and jewelry that I asked Jack if they were not consorts of bankers or capitalists. He was much amused, for, he told me in a whisper, bankers and capitalists were the poorest classes in the community. They barely earned a living and had to work early and late to get a sufficiency. The gentleman dressed in satin with a tiara of diamonds was the husband of a day laborer who earned enormous wages. The gentleman dressed in pink silk, with a pearl necklace, was the son of a woman who had peddled matches on the street from a basket for many years until she was the wealthiest resident of the metropolis. But bankers were even poorer than presidents of railroads or insurance companies. And the bigger those companies the poorer were its officials.

After supper we went to Jack's room for a good long visit. Jack's history of his life is too voluminous to insert here, but a few items will help my own story. It seems when he left the United States he was so broken up by the refusal of a certain young lady that he vowed never to return. So although confounded by the unique state of affairs in Upside-down-ville, he concluded to conform to all its customs and requirements. To earn his living he applied for a place in a machine shop. But

machine work there being so much slower than handwork, one man being able to do ten or twelve times the amount accomplished by a machine, he could not make adequate wages. Therefore he was obliged to leave, having never learned the trade of handwork. On recommendation of a friend he accepted a place on a vegetable farm. To begin with he worked in a potato orchard, and after that crop was harvested helped dig the apples and pears. Then the squashes began to ripen on the bushes, and the nuts on the vines, and one thing following another he managed to get along a couple of months longer. Then he was again out of a job. After searching a long time until he had nearly become destitute another friend came to the rescue and got him the position of teacher in a school, where he still was.

"But, Jack," said I, "how can you fill such a place when your own education is so slight?"

"Schools are different here. Pupils learn to forget, not to memorize."

"To forget!" said I, in astonishment.

"Yes. You know children are learning all the time. It follows they must pick up many things not true and many things unwise for them to know. It is to eradicate these I am hired."

"How can you make a child forget what it already knows?"

"It is easy. First I make a confusion in his mind regarding the matter I wish to obliterate, then talk in a contrary way, and finally so fill his attention with other things that his original belief is erased from the tablet of memory. I have been very successful at this, as I am told by Miss Penstock, our school visitor and a dear old lady of sweet sixteen."

"Are there books which teach this science of forgetting?"

"Not one. Nor do we allow a child to have a book in school. In fact we would punish a child who should bring one."

"And so I suppose you will make this your life work?"

For the first time in his life Jack blushed.

"Now I shall have to tell a secret. I am soon to be married."

"And who is the happy woman?"

"Dr. Savum. She has been courting me some time and I have given her my hand. She is the physician assigned to this sanitary district. With only few cases of sickness for the last few years,

and not one for over eleven months, she has laid by a large amount of credit that will enable us to start housekeeping in good style. So you see I shall exchange school for the pleasanter occupation of domestic affairs."

"How can she earn much income with no sickness to speak of?"

"She is allowed a salary of five thousand a year as long as her precinct is free from disease. Should there be any sickness a certain amount is deducted for every patient. Dr. Squills in the next district had a bad reverse a year ago. An epidemic of grippe broke out there with so many cases it ate up her year's salary in a few weeks, and as two patients died on her hands she was fined five hundred dollars each, which left her badly in debt."

"At all events your beloved must have an easy time as long as conditions are good."

"On the contrary, she has to work very hard, visiting daily all under her charge, examining every person, looking into all sanitary arrangements and seeing they are kept in perfect order. Preventive medicines are left to be taken by persons in good health, but should they be taken ill all drugs are removed and nature given a chance to cure. It is the doctor's business to care for people while they are well."

That afternoon I had an adventure. Jack having an appointment with his dressmaker which prevented him from going out for a couple of hours, I concluded to take a stroll by myself, arranging to have him meet me when he should be at liberty. Sauntering up the street I looked down from the sidewalk into the shop windows below. The combinations of commodities sold in the stores were singular. One had eggs and hardware, another dry goods and butter. When I came to one displaying fruits, laces and ribbons and stood looking at the odd mixture I somehow was reminded of Maria. The thought occurred to me that it would be a graceful acknowledgment of his services to send him some inexpensive present. My first inclination was to buy him some of the purple oranges. Then I concluded to get something which would last for a keepsake. Seeing some bright yellow silk handkerchiefs with a gaudy pattern I thought one of those might please him.

"Have you lost some of your family?" said the clerk, as I

hesitated between one of that color and another of a dazzling blue.

"No. What made you think so?"

"I judged from your examination of these mourning goods."

"I would like something to please the taste of a young lady."

"We have a plain black that is considered quite gay and much affected by those inclined to be dudish."

Such a one I handed to the clerk to wrap up, and as he passed the bundle back he told me the price was fifty cents and I would find the cash box on the counter near the door. There was no cashier at the designated spot, but seeing a drawer on the showcase filled with money of all denominations I threw a silver half dollar into it and went out. Before I got far away I heard loud cries and saw two policewomen beckoning me to stop. Imagine my astonishment when told I was under arrest. I demanded the reason, but was told I would be informed when I reached the police station. When I arrived there I found the place anything but formidable. Not an iron bar at any window nor anything to distinguish it from an ordinary dwelling. Except for a few policewomen who sat near the door one would not have surmised it to be even a public building. The interior was furnished like some modern club house. In the parlor I was introduced to the chief, a lady of fine physique. To her my captors made the statement that I had not only taken a silk handkerchief from a store without settling for it, but had endeavored to defraud the owner of fifty cents more.

"There must be some mistake," said I, "for I certainly put a half dollar in the cash box."

"I shall have to hold you for trial," said the chief, "and until the time for court you may have the full privilege of the house. Write your name in the record book, please."

The chief read my signature, looked me over carefully with a twinkle in her eye, but made no comments.

"Must I be shut in a cell?"

"We have no cells."

"Am I the only offender? I see no other private citizens around."

"The five policewomen you saw outside are under arrest."

"Is the force corrupt?"

The chief smiled and shook her head.

"Then would you mind telling me why they are under arrest?"

"One of them allowed a man to vote at an election yesterday. Our laws give only women that right. Another was absent when a fight took place in her precinct, and the offenders escaped. Various nuisances have been committed in the territory assigned to the others, and as the guilty parties were not apprehended the policewomen of those districts are held personally responsible. They will probably be sentenced to serve out the time which would have been given the real offenders, and also have to pay the fines, unless the rogues are found before the time of commitment expires."

I asked the privilege of sending for Jack, which was accorded. I also suggested it might be well to have a lawyer.

"No lawyers are allowed in any court, unless they themselves are under indictment."

"Then why do they exist? What work do they perform?"

"It is their business to draw up and simplify laws to be enacted by our legislature. If there is ever any controversy as to the plain intent of the government the lawyer who wrote the law has to pay heavy indemnities. They sometimes make wills, but these must also be worded so there can be no occasion for dispute. It would be disastrous for a lawyer to have one of his wills disputed in regard to any of its provisions, for if a judgment should be secured against it the lawyer would have it to pay. But we have not had a will case in this country for many years."

Jack arrived just before the Judge made her appearance. We adjourned to a cosy reception-room and my case was called at once at Jack's request. The chief stated the misdemeanor of which I was accused, and I was asked what I had to say about it. I told the story as I have already given it to the reader. Jack then asked permission to say a few words to the court and myself. First he told the Judge that I was a foreigner from the United States, and unused to the ways and customs of the place. Then, turning to me, he informed me that all money was there considered as evidence of debt. Whatever money a person had in his possession showed that the holder owed work or goods to that

amount. I had purchased a silk handkerchief worth fifty cents, and, therefore, ought to have taken a half dollar from the money box and thereby have relieved the storekeeper of that much of his liabilities. Instead of doing so I had added to them.

The chief said I was guilty of another misdemeanor. I was evidently a man and yet was masquerading in women's clothes. This Jack also explained to the court and begged leniency, inasmuch as I was used to wearing that apparel in my own country. The Judge said it was needless to proceed further, and as he was satisfied that I had not meant to break any laws he would withhold judgment if I would promise to go back to the store and make the proper corrections, and would also agree to wear skirts in the future. I informed the Judge that I should be glad to right any mistakes I had made at the store, but as to wearing skirts I would rather leave the country. I was asked if I would go at once if released and on giving my promise was told to consider myself free.

Jack was fairly used up at the sudden termination of my visit. He urged me to try his clothes for a day or two, but I could not. Sorrowfully we walked to the office of the ox-team express. Then, after saying good bye, I purchased my ticket, taking five dollars of money from the ticket seller which I brought home with me and can show at any time.

Sometime, if I can make up my mind to don the clothes they wear there, I may go again, and then will tell you more of Upside-down-ville.

The Great White Serpent of the Malorli.*

BY ALEXANDER RICKETTS.

HE wedding ceremony was over, and Harding had congratulated the bride and groom in the calm, conventional manner. As he turned to go, he stood for a long moment in the doorway, gazing back on them with an inscrutable look. Then he went out into the night. All that night he tramped the streets with restless energy, but the morning found him leaning upon the rail of a liner, staring blankly at the shores of the bay as they glided by, and if any one had been rash enough to tell him that when he next saw them a wife would be standing at his side, he would have revelled in throwing his informant overboard. And that was the last his friends saw of him for years.

Forgetting is a hard job for a man like Harding, but even he found, as time went by, that the memory of the girl he loved did not sting him so often or sharply, and the restless desire for change — any change, so long as it was a change — which had driven him hither and thither all over Europe and most of Asia, and plunged him recklessly into any adventure which suggested itself, did not lash him on so relentlessly. Instead, there came a time when any action became an effort, a time when all he sought was quiescence of mind and body. He was not gloomy or misanthropic. He had never been either; but the fierce fires of his longing for her who had given herself to another were at last under his control, and he felt the reaction from the turmoil as a strong man does after strenuous conflict.

In this mood he turned his steps to North Africa. On a prior visit fate had put it in his way to do a favor to the sheik of one of the desert tribes, and he now recalled the frank invitation to be

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* The writer of this story received a cash prize of $100 in THE BLACK CAT story contest ending February 26, 1902.

his guest for as long as he would. With considerable difficulty Harding located the sheik, and at considerable danger joined him. The tribesmen do not forget, and his welcome was undoubted. The life contented him. The dignified courtesy of the men, never intruding but always cordially ready to companion him, the slow, infrequent speech, the long, thoughtful silences, all soothed his distracted spirit, and in aimless roving, either with the sheik's tribe or with others akin to it, he passed many years in the Desert.

The weird tales of the story-tellers, told in the flickering light of the camp-fire while the steady stars shone above them with the strong, full light of the desert nights, and all around stretched the vast reaches of barren sand, fascinated him. Particularly one — it was hardly a story, simply a collection of rumors and guesses woven into a narrative — about the Great White Serpent of the Malorli interested him. It was to the effect that somewhere in the forest on the further side of the Great Desert dwelt a tribe of serpent worshippers. The object of their adoration was a monstrous snake, pure white, and of prehistoric size. This god was fed upon human sacrifices, but refused all not white like itself. The worshippers being negroes of quite phenomenal blackness were therefore compelled to kidnap the sacrifices where they might. Diligent inquiry convinced Harding that the tale had this much foundation: There was not a tribe among the desert rovers that had not for many, many years mysteriously lost a member. Sometimes it was a man, sometimes, a woman, but the lost was always youthful and always gone without a trace except that the following morning in the midst of the camp would be found a rudely carved ivory snake. Pursuit was invariably futile.

Again Harding's mood changed. He began to long for something different. What it should be he didn't care. Civilization did not attract him, but the aimless life he was living no longer satisfied him. Then it was that this fascinating story fastened upon his imagination, and he resolved to investigate it.

Upon making his determination known, the old sheik tried to dissuade him. Then he offered to accompany Harding, himself and his young men. This Harding refused, saying, with a smile, "No, no, Sheik Ilderim; one man can go in a quest like this where two cannot. I go alone, and if I stay, there are few to mourn me."

"Then may Allah be with you, my son," replied Sheik Ilderim, stroking his beard sadly, but too courteous to offer further opposition to his guest. "If go you will, we will take you to the farthest oasis; there you shall take the two fleetest camels, for perchance if you fail to reach the forest on the first you can return on the second, and there, if you return not for ten years, you will always find some of us awaiting to welcome or succor you, and may Allah guide your camel. Allah is Allah!"

A month later amid the lamentations of the tribe Harding set out from the oasis. He travelled light, for he knew that speed was of the utmost importance. He carried a rifle, revolver and knife, but he knew that if strategy would not gain the goal he sought force could not. His precious store of parched grain and dried dates, with a water-skin, were loaded on the led-camel, the other — they were both the pick of the herd — bore himself. He travelled by night, shielding himself as best he could from the insupportable rays of the sun in the daytime, and urging his camels to their best speed. Still, when at length the one he rode sank down dying, he could see nothing in all the world but the waste of desolate sand measuring away in all directions illimitably.

But he had no thought of turning back. Lightening himself of the rifle, he mounted the spare camel, with no weapons but his revolver, a handful of extra cartridges and his knife, and pushed on. Another night's travel, and another, and in the middle of the third his second camel fell beneath him with a gasp almost human.

Slowly Harding scanned the horizon. Nothing but barren sand met his questioning gaze. Throwing away his revolver and cartridges, hesitating a moment over his knife, but deciding to retain that, he stuffed a handful of dates into his pocket, drained the last drops of water and pushed out on foot into the desert. On and on he plodded, his mind set only on never giving up until he had reached the farthest point possible to human endurance.

The sun came up and found him doggedly stumbling on. Suddenly he stopped, shaded his eyes with his hands for a minute, and gave a hoarse cry of wonder. There, bearing directly down upon him was a group of perhaps a dozen camels, but they were of a size and strength and speed such as he had never seen, and leading them rode three repulsive negroes, black as glistening coal.

The next moment he was surrounded, and with lightning-like swiftness bound and laid in a covered litter slung between two of the camels. Then the whole party, turning directly back, bore him swiftly away, retracing its tracks; but in all of it, to his utter amazement, he was handled with the gentlest care.

A long day's journey brought them to the edge of a vast forest. There he was transferred to another party of negroes more repulsive, if that were possible, than his captors, and at once a march was begun into the forest. Up to this time not a word had been spoken, but now he was surprised to find his guards quite ready to talk with him. Their speech was a sort of mongrel Arabic which he had little difficulty in comprehending, and they eagerly assured him that no harm was intended him, but upon the object of his capture they maintained a stolid silence. And all their actions bore out their assurances. Indeed, he was not only treated kindly, but with a deference and consideration which caused him the most gruesome anticipations.

For five days they marched steadily, deeper and deeper into the forest. On the sixth they reached a little village on the edge of a small lake, and the whole populace gave itself up immediately to feasting and rejoicing over their arrival. As the villagers thronged around him, Harding became quite uncomfortable over his prominence in the holiday, especially when the maidens openly admired his complexion and figure, and more so as the haunting suspicion never left him that it was due entirely to his being destined as the next sacrifice to the Great White Serpent, if that storied reptile really existed. With a steadily sinking heart he reflected that he could only await developments, escape being clearly impossible, although he was allowed to go unbound.

A day and a night they rested in the village. The next, after elaborate and evidently ceremonial bathing in the lake, the party donned white robes, putting one also on Harding, and set forth along a well-used road leading from the village. An hour's walk brought them to a mighty river. Both its banks for a long distance up and down were crowded with waiting negroes, maintaining a solemn silence, but what instantly riveted Harding's attention was a small island directly in the centre of the stream. It was covered, until in many places the water lapped the walls, with

a circular stone structure some fifty feet high, and pierced here and there by gateways with pointed arches.

The arrival of the party was greeted with loud acclaim by the multitudes thronging the banks of the river, and as they marched through to a barge awaiting them, the cries of joy and welcome sounded like a death knell in Harding's ears, for he grimly suspected that he himself had little occasion to feel joyous.

They were met at the largest gateway of the stone structure by a number of men robed in white also, and conducted into a lofty and spacious hall. Harding's eyes rapidly swept the room in hopes some way of escape might appear, but as they scanned the lower end of it he felt his knees tremble beneath him, and the hand of fear upon his throat. The next second, however, he recovered himself, and, outwardly calm, gazed upon the most horrible sight he had ever had to face.

It was no mere story-teller's myth. There, coiled fold upon fold, was an enormous snake. It was a glistening, phosphorescent white, except where its heavy-lidded eyes shone like lifeless rubies, and it seemed to Harding that all the hall was filled with a dull and sickly radiance shimmering from its coils. He could not guess what its length might be, but at the thickest its body was certainly as big around as a barrel.

Around and around in a great circle in front of it swung the priests, their white robes swinging and swaying with their motions, chanting as they danced a dirge-like melody that sent the chills creeping up and down Harding's spine and stiffened the hairs upon the back of his neck. Faster and faster they circled, now contracting their ring, now expanding it, weaving and whirling, swaying and swinging, until Harding grew dizzy watching them. Then, with a thunderous triumphant shout, they stopped, forming the two sides of a lane straight from Harding to the serpent.

And then he rubbed his eyes in sheer bewilderment, forgetting his awful peril. For, from amongst the folds of the coiled serpent, lightly sprang a maiden so radiant in her pure loveliness that his heart stood still as she slowly and bashfully advanced up the lane between the silent priests, and stood blushing before him, but with her glorious eyes fixed confidently upon his, and her hands outstretched trustingly for his in a mute appeal. She was irresistible.

Harding gathered her hands firmly in his, and hardly knowing what he was doing, drew her closer and closer to him until his lips reverently touched her forehead.

At this the priests burst into joyous acclaim, and from their midst came the oldest, who laid his hands upon their heads, saying, "Man and wife ye now are."

Then, turning to the assembled priests, he cried, "Behold, O Slaves of the Serpent, behold ye the Children of the Serpent! Let all worship and care for them as ye would the seed of the Great White Serpent shall not die."

They were then taken to the roof of the building and shown to the crowds outside with the same words, and from that multitude instantly rose shout after shout of joy and thanksgiving. From there they were conducted to another part of the building, separated from the Hall of the Serpent by heavy wooden doors, and left alone.

Harding looked long upon the wife he had so unexpectedly married, and drew a long breath.

"We-ell," he said. "Well, this being food for a snake isn't so awful after all. Come here, little one."

With a glad little cry, the girl, who had been standing before him demurely waiting his pleasure, sprang to his side and clasped her hands upon his arm.

"You are content?" she asked, anxiously exploring his eyes.

"Content?" laughed Harding, putting his arms fondly around her. "More than that. I never expected to be so happy in my life. But what does it all mean? I thought I was to be fed to his Royal Snakeship as a particularly dainty tidbit."

Then Haidee, his wife, told him of the cult of the Serpent. The Great White Serpent was old, so old that no one knew when its worship had begun. Within the memory of the oldest priest, and of his father, and of his father before him, it had always lived in the temple; it on one side, and those known as its Children on the other, cared for and waited on by its Slaves, the negroes. Six times in the year was it fed with a pure white bullock without spot or blemish. Then for days it lay torpid and motionless, and none dared intrude npon it. At other times it came and went up or down the river, a stream from which swept across the end of the

Hall of the Serpent through doors made for that purpose, as it chose, but always it returned for the feeding. But, at intervals, it was fed upon human sacrifices. Harding shuddered, and drew Haidee closer to him, questioning her eagerly.

Yes, the Children of the Serpent were the sacrifices. If it were not so, the Slaves of the Serpent would perish miserably from the earth. When a child came to the Children of the Serpent it was taken from them, and carefully reared by a woman selected from all those who were Slaves of the Serpent. Then, when it was seen that it would live, was the time of the sacrifice, and both parents, instead of the bullock, were sacrificed to the Serpent. And when the child had grown to a marriageable age, the Desert Men were sent out on their strong and swift camels to find a mate for it, for they must both be white, nor did they ever fail to bring one, even as he himself had been brought. So the line of the Children of the Serpent never died, nor did the Great White Serpent ever lack its human sacrifices.

But if there was no child? No, Haidee did not know what then. It had never happened. Probably the Children of the Serpent would be sacrificed just the same, and the Desert Men would be sent out for both a man and a woman. She did not know, and why seek trouble? There was always a child.

During the days that followed, in all his happiness in Haidee, Harding's mind was ever busy planning their escape. He would not accept the dreadful fate which overhung them, with Haidee's fatalism, as inevitable, and it was a continual spur to his ingenuity, but without success. He learned that the priests who had crowded the Hall of the Serpent on the day of his arrival were also the chiefs of the villages scattered throughout the forest, and from their number he could easily see that for him and Haidee to traverse it without being discovered was an impossibility. Escape by land was out of the question.

But there was the river at their very door. If only they could float down that undiscovered it must take them to the sea, and whatever their fate then it must be less horrible than the one awaiting them. He had plenty of time and materials to construct a raft, for no one ever ventured to come to the temple unless they signalled for them to bring food, except upon the days of worship.

But the fishermen on the river, and the women and children always on its banks made such a scheme impossible in the daytime, and a quiet investigation showed Harding that, no matter how free they seemed to be, a close guard was kept upon every exit from the temple at night. Almost he lost hope.

One of his pleasures during all this time was in weaning his wife away from her superstitious worship of the Serpent. Brought up to reverence it as a god, as she of course had been, it was long before his patient teaching of higher and better things prevailed, nor could she ever look upon it with the utter abhorrence which filled his soul at the bare thought of it. Still, she did come, helped doubtless by her great love for him, to think of it as a mere reptile. Nor did she shudder any longer at the sacrilege when Harding, in his moments of despair, declared that before they should become its victims he would kill it, and endure whatever punishment the infuriated savages might inflict.

Twice had Harding been forced to witness the sacrifice of the white bullock to the Great White Serpent. Each time the sight of the slimy folds slowly crushing the living, screaming animal into a shapeless mass of broken bones and quivering flesh, the careful moistening of it with fetid saliva, and the deliberate deglutition of it had filled him with such sickening disgust and loathing that he could hardly stagger, faint and nauseated, from the horrid scene.

After the third time he covered his quivering face with shaking hands, and sank down weak and nerveless upon a skin at his wife's side. Quickly she caught his head to her bosom, and sought to soothe him by every endearment known to a loving woman.

"Oh, Haidee, Haidee," he cried, shivering with loathing even in her arms, "it — it actually screamed while being swallowed. It did. It did. It was alive yet. I heard it. Oh, my God!"

Little by little he regained command over his unstrung nerves, and ashamed of his outbreak, began fiercely planning the death of the great snake.

"I'll slash its head off to-morrow with that heavy knife I cut the rushes for your basket-making with," he declared, pacing excitedly back and forth. "I'll kill the beastly worm, and skin it, and make —" he stopped suddenly, and stood motionless for a few

moments lost in thought. Then he continued, more excitedly, "Why didn't I think of this before? It'll work. I know it'll work. That infernal snake can go wherever it pleases. And its hide is waterproof, of course. Haidee, my dearest, how long will it take you to weave two great baskets — so big?"

He held his hands wide apart.

"What is it, beloved? Tell me all," asked Haidee, alarmed by the wild excitement in his face.

With rapid words Harding explained the plan that had flashed upon him, developing it as he spoke. He would kill the snake, and carefully skin it. Then he would place the basket-work inside the skin, and draw that up around it. It would make a canoe which he was sure would hold them, and the girth of the snake was so large that they could draw the skin clear over the top of the basket-work, and lie inside until they were safe from observation. The head be could hold above water by running a pole up the neck, and a couple of poles spliced together would hold the tail out behind. The basket-work would give enough roundness to the body to deceive anybody, especially in the water, and as the snake swam up or down the river at pleasure no one would think anything strange at seeing it or would dare investigate too closely. It would certainly be a couple of days before they would be missed, perhaps longer, and by that time he hoped to be beyond pursuit. In any event, no more horrible fate could be theirs than the one to which they were doomed.

Haidee caught his enthusiasm, and at once set to work. They really, upon sober second thought, had plenty of time, for the snake never was seen for at least two weeks after it had gorged a bullock, during which time it lay torpid in its hall digesting its meal, and until the end of that time it would excite suspicion at once if it were seen in the river.

The day at last dawned, however, when the Great White Serpent would again be stirring. Haidee's basket-work, made as nearly waterproof as possible, was ready, and the knife had been sharpened to a razor-edge upon a smooth stone Harding had found on the bank of the river. Grasping it firmly, he gave his wife a long embrace, and swinging open the door, stepped resolutely within the Hall of the Serpent.

There it lay, stretched at its enormous length, inert and motionless still from its gorge, the Great White Serpent of the Malorli. Softly but swiftly Harding dashed towards its head. As he approached, it opened its eyes lazily and fixed them full upon him with a sinister stare. There was something so evil, so malignant, so cruel and devilish in their pallid depths that for an instant they halted him as an icy hand seemed to clutch his heart. The next, he had taken the last stride, and surely and mightily struck the blow. The keen, heavy knife bit clear through the backbone, right at the base of the skull. There was a mighty heave of the huge body, and Harding leaped across it just in time to avoid being enveloped in the fatal embrace of its horrid folds. Writhing and twisting, coiling and uncoiling, now lashing out with tremendous force, next contracting into fearful knots, the enormous reptile thrashed wildly about the hall. A dozen times Harding missed an awful death by the least fraction of an inch before he gained the door his wife bravely held open for him. Breathless and panting they watched the earth-shaking death throes of the monster.

At last, with a mighty quiver from head to tail, it lay still in death. With a shout of triumph Harding sprang to its side, and slipped the point of his knife under the thick skin where his blow had laid it open. Rip, rip, rip, and he had it slit clear to the tail, still faintly moving. He worked with feverish energy, Haidee valiantly helping, for now they had little time to spare, and he found that before their strength was equal to drawing the skin from under he had to cut the body into lengths. They hardly took time to breathe. The sweat streamed from them. A dozen times their strength seemed exhausted. But, as night fell, the basket-work was in place, the thick skin drawn up around it and sewn up, except for a slit big enough to admit them, and made as waterproof at the seam as possible with melted beeswax, the pole holding the head above water propped securely in place, the other spliced one extended the tail, and, as he held this oddest of vessels buoyantly floating upon the stream running across the end of the Hall, and noted its naturalness, Harding at last felt with an exultant thrill that escape was a possibility.

Haidee was already inside with a small store of provisions. Harding stepped lightly in and stretched himself upon the bot-

tom, after one keen look around to see that all was right so far. He drew the skin together above them, and the current swept them out upon the broad bosom of the river. For good or ill their strange voyage had begun.

And it went better than even Harding in his most sanguine moments had dared hope. For three nights and two days they drifted with the current, without accident or molestation, and shortly after dawn of the third day he was suddenly awakened from the light doze he had permitted himself by the sound of rifle shots and the noise of bullets zipping into the water at his side. With his heart in his mouth he peered cautiously out. There, hardly a hundred yards away, came steaming up a little launch with a man, a white man, standing in the bow, blazing hopefully away at what he mistook for a snake.

With a joyous shout Harding sprang to his feet. "Hold on! Hold on there!" he shouted, waving his arms with reckless disregard of an upset. "Do you want to start international complications by shooting us?"

"Ah, beg pardon I'm sure," replied the sportsman, dropping his rifle in surprise. "I didn't know it was your private yacht, you know. But what the devil — oh, beg pardon, a lady, too."

Explanations were soon made. The stranger was an English sportsman exploring the river in his launch, but at once he turned back and carried them to the nearest port where steamships touched. The snake's skin probably adorns his home at this minute, as Harding, with great generosity, never wanting to set eyes on it again, presented him with it.

A few weeks later Harding and Haidee stood upon the deck of a vessel watching the shores of Africa fade into the distance.

"And now to get word of my safety to good old Sheik Ilderim," he murmured, looking fondly into her eyes, "and then home, my dearest."

And Haidee answered, the love-light shining back at him happily, "Where your home is, O beloved, there is mine."

Penelope's Proposals.*

BY SWIFT ADAMS.

"I THINK I'll get married," said Penelope to herself, as she sat in a quiet corner on the veranda of the Seaside Hotel.

Penelope was young and pretty. No level-headed person would ever have thought of making an assertion that, by any possibility, could be construed as contradictory to such palpable facts. And every man at the hotel was heels over head in love with her.

After having reached this important matrimonial decision, she charged along the piazza, so wrapt in her cogitations that at a sharp turn she bumped, with considerable violence, into Tom Hathaway.

"Oh!" she gasped, "I beg your pardon! I—"

"You can't have it," interrupted Tom. "There's no reason why I should give it to you. It was delightful."

"Tom Hathaway, aren't you ashamed—"

"Not at all," said Tom. "Let's play golf."

"But it's so hot," protested Penelope. "Even the caddies are asleep."

"Never mind," said Tom. "Then we'll have the links all to ourselves. Come along."

Tom was on his knees, making her tee, when it happened. Penelope stood close by him. Suddenly he seized her hand.

"Penelope, dearest, for a long time I have wanted to tell you something. I want to say" (he fervently kissed her hand) "that I—"

"Oh, Tom!" screamed Penelope. "Whatever is the matter?"

Tom had jumped to his feet and was wildly grabbing at his

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mouth and choking. He had planted a passionate kiss on a wad of damp sand that, in his excitement, he had pressed into her hand.

"Hello, what's up?" and Bob Hamilton, who had heard Penelope scream, came running out of the club house.

"I — I guess Tom has some sand in his mouth," said Penelope.

"Good," said Bob; "it's good for his digestion. But how on earth —"

He stopped short. Neither of his listeners was in a condition to utter an intelligible answer. Tom made a break for the pump, and Penelope was sitting on the ground, sobbing with laughter.

"What in Heaven's name is the matter with Tom?" asked Bob, after she had in a measure recovered her composure.

"He just had an accident," she replied.

"Oh, all right," said Bob. "If you don't want to tell, I don't want to know. Let's take a walk."

They promenaded lazily until they came upon a secluded bench. They sat and chatted, and his arm crept toward her waist, much to the consternation of an old gardener, who unobserved behind them was sprinkling the lawn with a hose.

"There is something I have long wanted to say to you," began Bob.

"Oh, dear!" sighed Penelope to herself. "They all begin the same way."

"I want to tell you a secret, darling," he said, approaching nearer to her lips than her ear.

The poor gardener was so perturbed at Bob's words and actions that he nervously dropped the hose.

Bob opened his mouth to make the rest of his declaration, and was astounded to receive in it an inch stream of water. Gasping and spluttering, he struggled to his feet. In mad consternation, the gardener clutched the offending hose and disappeared.

Penelope gazed at Bob with stunned horror and surprise.

"You — you are not having a fit, are you, Bob?" she asked tremulously.

"Some careless damn fool —" sputtered Bob.

"Beg pardon!" exclaimed Fred Chase, another of the Devoted Circle, suddenly coming into view, with a pair of oars over his shoulder. "Penelope, I'm ashamed of you. I didn't think you

would tolerate profanity — even from Bob," he tacked on with good-natured sarcasm.

Bob glared at him, and, without a word to either of them, stalked away.

"What's the rip with Bob?" asked Fred. "He looks out of sorts."

"He feels a little tired," she said drily. "Is it nice rowing?" she added quickly, anxious to divert his attention from poor Bob.

"It is, if you have a parasol and are prepared to lie quite still," he said. "Come on and try it, anyway."

As she sank down on the boat cushions, she gave a little sigh. "I suppose he couldn't have gone on after that," she mumured half aloud.

"Eh, what's that?" asked Fred.

"I was thinking how handsome you look in that hat," she replied calmly.

"Thanks," said Fred. "The same to you and many of them."

"You don't talk connectedly, Fred," commented Penelope.

"How could I," suddenly burst out Fred, "with you so near me? Penelope, dear, I want a wife."

"He's original, at any rate," thought Penelope.

"And you, darling, ever since that day —"

"Look where you're going, Fred!" shrieked Penelope.

It was too late. The boat crashed into a rock that stood half out of the water. The boat stopped. Fred didn't. He kept on going and landed on his back several feet the other side of the rock.

"Fred, oh, Fred, are you drowned?" cried Penelope.

But it happened that Fred was not drowned. He presently reappeared, standing in about four feet of water. Nevertheless, Malarack Hartford, who, from the shore, had witnessed the latter part of the incident, jumped into somebody's boat and pulled frantically for the scene of disturbance. He first made sure that Penelope was not hurt, and then rowed over to Fred, who was busily engaged in wiping the water from his face and cursing himself heartily.

"Too bad, old man," said Malarack. "Jump into the boat and I'll take you to Penelope."

"No," said Fred, "I'm too — wet. You take her ashore, old chap, and I'll be everlastingly obliged to you. I'll take your boat."

Malarack was not at all reluctant to make the change, and soon had Penelope on terra firma.

"Do let us walk under the trees," said Penelope. "So much has happened to me to-day that my nerves are quite on edge."

Malarack assented. As they strolled along, Malarack suddenly turned and said:

"Penelope, there is something I have wanted to say to you for a long while. I —"

"Wait!" cried Penelope, with sudden decision. "Sit down on that bench."

Malarack stared at her curiously and complied.

"You won't fall off, will you?" asked Penelope.

"I should hope not," said Malarack, looking at her in blank surprise.

"Please put this parasol over your shoulder," directed Penelope.

Malarack did so, eyeing her nervously.

"Have you any sand in your pockets?" she suddenly demanded.

"Penelope!" he began severely.

"There! It's all right now," said Penelope, sinking down beside him. Malarack, after all, was the one she would have chosen, she thought. "You were going to say?" she said softly.

"Eh? Oh, yes," replied Malarack. "I have been wanting to tell you, as an old friend, that you really powder your nose too heavily. Now, I hope — good Heavens! Penelope, what ails you?"

Penelope had fainted.

One of the Few.*

BY MINNIE S. BAKER.

HE represented that product of the South which, God help us, seems on the increase instead of otherwise. A tall, angular, low-browed woman of middle age, with great mournful eyes, out of whose gloomy depths a phantom seemed to be forever asking: "Who am I? What am I?" and to which the stern chin, hollow jaws and defiant lips seemed ever answering: "An alien, a creature without a people, a human without a race."

It was a raw, drizzly day in November when she came to me for work. Cook had been discharged the day previous, and that very morning nurse had had to be sent home with a well-developed case of measles — and not a child in the house had had it!

I was telling myself that when the poet wrote about melancholy days he knew what he was about after all, for just the week before, I had voiced a long-simmering disgust that the very worst part of November was this inevitable harvest of parodies and quotations about "the saddest days" of all the year.

And then Clarissa came; my washerwoman had told her that I needed a cook.

I had never kept any servants but full-blooded negroes, and even in my dilemma I looked at her somewhat askance. While the half-breeds are more intelligent and quicker to learn, yet they are not to be depended upon like the thoroughbred negro, whose honesty and faithfulness are far superior and more than counteract the tricky shrewdness of the other.

Unlike most of her class, she was poorly, even insufficiently clad, and I, noting the circumstance, wondered if here indeed was one

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without guile. "My nurse is ill with measles, which in all probability the children will have, too. I really need her place filled more than I need a cook," I answered, doubtfully.

"I like children and I am used to general housework, 'm," was the quiet response delivered without either servility or officiousness. "And I won't mind the measles; my children have had them."

"Oh, you have a family, then?"

"Two girls, one fourteen, the other five. I have separated from my husband four years."

A repressed bitterness added a touch of pathos to the simple words.

I asked her several other questions and then, partly from necessity and partly because of the woe in her sombre eyes, I engaged her.

As we came to know her better she proved herself more and more of an oddity as compared with the pert, wanton generality of her class. She was the first servant we had ever had whose English was anything like tolerable and also the first one without the inherited hatred of slavery days, for "po' buckra."

Her words were rare, but when uttered were never idle ones. "Most colored people despise poor white folks; I'm one of the few who don't, though I don't like to work for them; but after all it's mostly the blue bloods that are responsible for such as me," she said one day, in the intense tone we were beginning to know.

My husband laughingly said I was investing Clarissa with too much romance, but I told him it was more like tragedy.

She had been with us nearly a year when I was called to the telephone by my husband's sister, with whom our little daughter had been spending a day and night.

"You mustn't get alarmed, Sarah," she said, "but Edith doesn't seem well, and I think, perhaps, you or John ought to see her. No, no," as my excited voice began to interrupt her; "honestly, it does not seem to be anything serious yet, but in case it should be, suppose you let me 'phone for John to bring Dr. Brooks, while you get the boys off to your father's on the first train?"

Then I knew that she feared scarlet fever, for there was more than one yellow flag floating in our little village, but I said noth-

ing either to Clarissa or the boys, as she helped me get them ready for what, apparently, was only one of their frequent visits to their grandfather's.

Then telling her that I was going after Edith and cautioning her to roll the baby out in the shady back yard, I hurried away. This being Clarissa's story instead of mine, I need not dwell upon my own feelings, or the grave fears of all of us when the doctor ordered us to take Edith home in a closed carriage, saying it might be scarlet fever and it might not; he could not tell till the following day. He added that it would be just as well to keep the baby away from his sister till it should be settled.

We got the little one upstairs into the nursery and, leaving her with her father, I went to tell Clarissa.

"If it should be scarlet fever I shall want you to take entire charge of Master Bertie in the daytime, while I stay with Miss Edith," I added.

"Mrs. Holby, 'm, I'm one of the few that believes in being square and honest, and I must tell you right now, if Miss Edith *has* got scarlet fever, I'll have to quit," she replied, scarcely waiting until I had finished.

"Leave me! Right now, in my trouble, too. Why, Clarissa, you cannot mean it?" I cried, in genuine alarm.

"Indeed, ma'am, I must. I've got children of my own to think of."

"But you will not see Miss Edith at all. You shall not even go upstairs. Don't you understand that we will not let you be exposed to it, on account of the baby?"

"I can't take any chances, though I'd do it quicker for you than anybody, ma'am," was the obstinate reply.

"And Master Bertie loves you so, Clarissa. What will become of him in the hands of a stranger when I cannot be with him?"

At that her face softened, but she still shook her head. Then I hinted at double wages and was met by such a look of indignant pride that it almost made me think I ought to beg her pardon.

"I know it looks low-down to leave you like this, Mrs. Holby, 'm, and it nearly kills me to do it, but I must."

Then she gave me a piercing glance, which seemed to convey the deepest workings of her brain to mine, and continued:

"I have always wished that my children had never been born, and I've always wished that they would die before I did. *And just for this reason I have to take better care of them!* Oh, do try to understand it, ma'am. They'd better be dead a thousand times than to fall into their father's hands, for he would sell them, soul and body, for one drink of liquor."

I said no more after that, and so, though John swore and Bertie wailed, Clarissa left us, "standing not upon the order of her going," for she vanished almost as suddenly as she had first appeared.

But even after Clarissa left, and we were quarantined and a nurse was not to be had for love or money, and our neighbors were afraid to unclose their shutters opening in our direction, and the passers-by, like the Levite, drew their garments about them and crossed to the opposite side of the street, still the heavens did not fall and we all managed to come through as sound as ever, and Edith more so.

Time passed, and we only heard of Clarissa occasionally after that. The burden of her apparent ingratitude seemed to weigh upon her, for she never came to the house, though I knew she asked after us whenever there was an opportunity.

It had been three years since she left and once more our household was under a cloud, darker even than the first one, for this was diphtheria, and Bertie, still the baby, was nearer death's door than Edith had been even at her worst.

And once more Clarissa appeared at the back door asking to see me.

"Go and tell her that I cannot possibly see her now," I said to the messenger. "Tell her, too, that there is diphtheria in the house."

Presently the door opened and Clarissa herself stood before me — far more gaunt and sombre than of old.

"Mrs. Holby, 'm, I've come to help nurse Master Bertie, if you will let me," she said simply; then went on, "I'm one of the few that pays other debts besides the money kind. I've always expected to do it some time — for leaving, you know."

"But what of your own children?" I asked, remembering her creed.

"They are both dead; one a month ago, the other last week. It

was the fever. They are better off, though I worked day and night to save them. You believe this, don't you, ma'am?" she asked earnestly.

I did believe it and told her so.

She had not cried when speaking of her own children, but when she looked at the flushed face of our boy the tears rushed to her eyes.

"My dear little boysie," she whispered softly, "what a man he is growing to be! And his beautiful curls are gone!"

After that we fought for the little life, side by side, and her tact, gentleness and powers of endurance I have never seen equalled. No position was too trying, no vigil too long, and when we won, and all the doctors agreed that Bertie would live, Clarissa shared equally with me the praise, gratitude and congratulations. But, alas, three days later she herself was stricken down, and though we did all for her that money and untiring devotion could do, our physician told us from the start it would be useless.

"First of all, she has no constitution," he said, "and besides that, she was utterly used up from nursing her own children. How she stood by Bertie as she did is simply a miracle. Certainly it could not have been power of her own."

"It is all right," she said, when she knew the truth; "I am glad for it to be just this way. And, Mrs. Holby,'m, you don't lay it up against me for leaving you that time?"

I answered her as well as I could for the sobs that choked me.

She did not speak again, and after it was all over we had her laid beside her children. John bought a simple stone to mark the spot and upon it was cut in clear letters: "One of the Few."

The children themselves volunteered to have the graves kept clean; and every now and then a sturdy little fellow with shining, close-cropped hair may be seen entering the colored cemetery with a bunch of flowers in his hands. That is Bertie.

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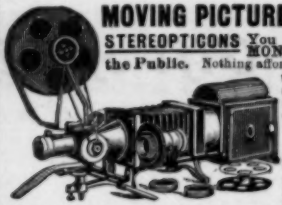

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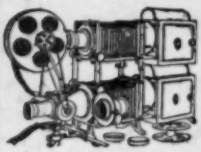

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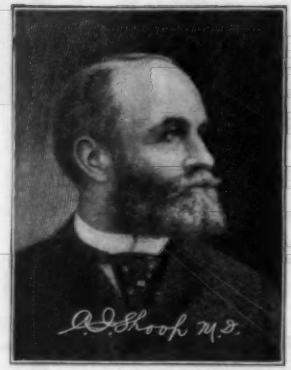
As an act of humanity

I ask you to tell me a friend who needs help.
That is all — just a postal — just the cost of a penny.
Tell me to-day the name of some sick one.



Tell Me The Book To Send

Then I will do this: — I will mail that sick one an order — good at any drug store — for six bottles of Dr. Shoop's Restorative. He may take it a month to prove what it can do. If it succeeds, the cost is $5.50. If it fails, *I will pay the druggist myself.* And the sick one's mere word shall decide it.

It is but a trifle I ask of you — just a minute's time — just a penny postal. And I ask it to aid a sick friend.

It is a remarkable thing that I do in return — something that nobody else ever offered. And I do it for a stranger.

Won't you do that little — and to-day — if I will do the rest?

You ask what good it will do.

That month's test will tell. It is true that my Restorative may fail. There is sometimes a cause — like cancer — which medicine cannot cure. But the very fact of my offer must prove that failures are rare, for if they were common the offer would ruin me.

In the past twelve years I have supplied my Restorative to hundreds of thousands on just those terms, and 39 out of each 40 have paid gladly, because they got well. I have found that the cured ones are fair — and not a penny is wanted from the rest.

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My boundless faith in this remedy is born of a lifetime's experience. I have tested it in hundreds of the most difficult cases that physicians ever meet. I have watched it succeed — countless times — when the best of other treatments failed.

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My success comes from strengthening the *inside* nerves. I bring back the nerve power which alone operates all the vital organs.

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Racine, Wis.

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Book No. 2 on the Heart.
Book No. 3 on the Kidneys.
Book No. 4 for Women.
Book No. 5 for Men (sealed).
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It's the nicest thing in the world to make—
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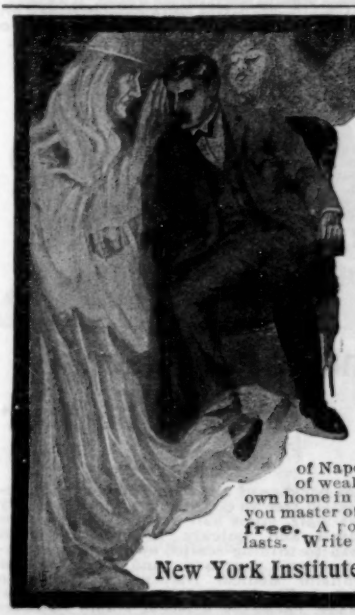

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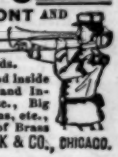

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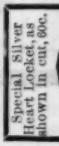

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Tasteful and Appropriate Christmas Gifts. Attractive and artistic patterns, woven on both sides and in all colors and sizes. Easily kept clean and warranted to outwear higher-priced carpets. Sent prepaid to any point east of the Rocky Mountains. Money refunded if not satisfactory. Illustrated catalogue showing rugs in actual colors sent free.

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A Handsome Xmas Gift

Every smoker wants a

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Self-feeding, Self-closing, No Trouble, No Waste. Made of fine soft purse leather in Brown, Red and Black, and costs a Quarter. Genuine Black Kangaroo, 50 cents. Genuine Brown Seal, 75 cents.

From your Tobacconist or DIRECT on receipt of price.

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"A Black Cat brings luck"

Search far and near but you'll never find a more Unique, Artistic, Appropriate Gift than our Black Cat

Good Luck Fob

The cat's head is strikingly life-like, the real thing—made of solid metal, mounted on fine tan pebbled art leather, with chain and snap. Bring luck to Husband, Father, Brother, Son, Sweetheart or Friend by buying one

For Him

For ladies nothing could be more acceptable, appropriate or useful than The Black Cat

Good Luck Brooch

or Good Luck Belt Pin. Both are "just the thing" in Design, Finish and Wearing qualities. To bring luck to Mother, Wife, Daughter, Sister, Sweetheart or Friend buy one

For Her

Order at once to insure receipt in time for the holidays.

Either Fob, Brooch or Belt Pin mailed, postage paid, for **25 cents.**

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$27.45 For this Organ

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$1,500,000

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The Consolidated Ubero Plantations Co.

Due July 1, 1912. Interest Payable Jan. 1 and July 1.

Principal and Interest Payable at the International Trust Co. - - Boston.

BONDS ISSUED IN COUPON FORM, WITH PRIVILEGE OF REGISTRATION AS TO PRINCIPAL.

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(Of GEO. A. ALDEN & CO., Importers of Crude Rubber, Boston.)

Treasurer, H. NEBEKER, ESQ., Indianapolis,
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The quality of our BOARD of DIRECTORS and ADVISORY BOARD has never before been surpassed in any combination representing brains, substance and commercial prominence.

This offering is part of an issue of $2,500,000 Ten-Year 6% First Mortgage Sinking Fund Gold Bonds, $1,000,000 having been placed in escrow for four years.

The bonds are offered on the following basis:

1000 10-year 6% First Mortgage Sinking Fund Gold Bonds, in denominations of $500 each, aggregating $500,000, **for Cash**. A bonus of $500 capital stock to be delivered coincidently with delivery of bonds.

In order that the money may not be received faster than it can be used for development, the company also offers **2000** 10-year 6% First Mortgage Sinking Fund Gold Bonds, in denominations of $500 each, aggregating $1,000,000, **on 45 months' time.** Purchasers to receive a 10-year 6% First Mortgage Sinking Fund Gold Note certified by **International Trust Company, Boston,** as being covered by mortgage securing said bonds, for an amount covering each payment as made. A bonus of $500 capital stock to be delivered coincidently with delivery of bonds, upon surrender of mortgage notes aggregating $500, to International Trust Company, Trustee.

The proceeds received from this sale of bonds will be used in further development of the property. *(See next page.)*

The Consolidated Ubero Plantations Co.

has combined under one management 18 properties, comprising 6000 acres of land, a large part of which has been under actual cultivation for four years. **The Tehuantepec National Railroad runs directly through the consolidated properties — Ubero being one of the principal stations on this road.**

This enables the Company to market the products of their plantations, which include coffee, rubber, yucca, pineapples, citrus fruits and all tropical products, to any northern, Pacific or Atlantic port.

The assets of the Company, in addition to the development of those eighteen (18) properties, include Starch Mills, Pineapple Cannery, Tin Can Factory, General Store, Bank, Warehouses, Machinery, etc., representing a present actual cash value of $1,011,062.50.

The Consolidated Ubero Plantations Company will continue the development of their present holdings and propose to purchase, plant and develop any contiguous properties, rights and assets useful in its business. To this end the Company desires to raise funds upon its bonds, secured by a mortgage trust deed to the International Trust Company, of Boston, upon all its real estate, buildings, machinery, equipment, trade marks and all other properties now owned or to be acquired. **It has, therefore, executed a first mortgage to the International Trust Company, Boston, Mass., upon all the assets, real and personal, of the (18) plantations included in this consolidation.**

ESTIMATED PROFITS.

	1903	1904	1905	1906
Guaranteed Interest on Bonds	6%	6%	6%	6%
Estimated Earning on Stock	3%	3%	4%	11%
Totals	9%	9%	10%	17%

After which the yearly income will increase gradually, as more crops come into bearing.

Attention is called to the fact that the management of The Consolidated Ubero Plantations Company has financed two similar companies during the past four years; the first, The Ubero Plantation Company of Indianapolis, now in its fourth year, paid a 10% dividend its first year, 15% the second and 20% the third (last) year. The second company, The Ubero Plantation Company of Boston, paid a 10% dividend last January, at the end of its first year, and will pay a second dividend of 10% next December.

Advantages of purchase for cash or on the graded payment plan outlined in our booklet entitled "6% First Mortgage Sinking Fund Gold Bonds." This booklet, together with legal opinion as to the validity of this issue, will be furnished on application in person or by letter to

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Rich 5-piece Upholstered Parlor Suites, at $14.95. A big line at $9.95 to $25.00.

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